

it's hard to hate someone whose story you know: stories of growth and change

This column features stories by Student Affairs professionals and students who are willing to share an experience (event, book, speaker, etc) which promoted growth, a change in perspective, an awareness of another, or when some knowledge that was previously missing slipped into place.

in-between identity

Erica Rojas & Claudia Snow

Below are the testimonies of our experiences as immigrants to the United States over 14 and 12 years ago, respectively. We have known each other for three years, and had never talked about our experiences with one another. Our stories are different, and yet, our reflections are strikingly similar. We hope to leave you with some food for thought—that regardless of the circumstances, the decade, or the country of origin, the story of the immigrant has not changed much.

Erica Rojas

I never imagined the impact October 31, 1998 would have on me. I knew things would be different, but I did not understand what “different” actually meant. All I knew is that I would no longer see my family and friends on a daily basis, live in my blue house, or walk the streets of “my hometown” Jalostotitlán, Jalisco (Mexico). I was told there was a better and happier life waiting for me in the United States, my place of birth, and that leaving behind the people and things I loved was the small price I had to pay. I was told

so many things, and yet I was told nothing, nothing at all.

October 31, 1998 is tattooed in my mind with many first-time memories. It was the first time I feared for my life. I arrived at the San Francisco International Airport alone and with two oversized suitcases, expecting to see my oldest brother. Instead, I saw Freddy Krueger standing outside the gate. It was my first experience with the Halloween holiday. It was the day I felt carpet under my feet for the first time—one of my most cherished memories. By the end of the day, I laid on the carpet inside a sleeping bag thinking of “my hometown,” missing it, and dreaming of the day I would go back. I felt lonely and out of place.

I returned to Jalostotitlán for one week in 2007. I soon realized Jalostotitlán was no longer my hometown. I spoke Spanish with an accent, questioned the traditions that I had once been part of, and felt ashamed for not seeing the discrimination that had always existed there. I felt lonely and out of place. For the first time, ironically, I wished to be back in the United States and even referred to Salt Lake City as “my hometown,” even



mission statement

The Student Affairs Diversity Council (SADC) strives to cultivate an environment that embraces and promotes the broad scope of diversity within the division.

though I knew SLC was not my hometown. Here, I speak English with an accent, I question the traditions that I am part of, and I feel ashamed of the discriminatory acts I see and hear of.

I have heard many times people say, “Why do they come?” and “Why do they stay here?” Through my testimony I hope to answer some of those questions. The story of the immigrant is unique, and yet similar. We come for many different reasons; I, for example, came in search of a better life. I/We don’t go back because there is not a place to go back to. The place we left and dreamt of no longer exists. I/We stay here because this place starts to feel more like home than the home we left behind. It is sickening to listen to the debates on immigration where little to no compassion is

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calendar

Safezone Training
Human Resource Office
 Wednesday, March 7, 2012

Awareness Weeks in March:

- > Asian American
- > Pacific Islander
- > MEChA
- > American Indian
- > Women's Week

Matthew Bowman
Sunstone Lecture Series
 Saturday, March 17, 2012

Afro-Brazilian Dance Class
SLC Arts Hub
 March 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29

Uni-versity Di-versity
Mash-Up
Utah Cultural Celebration
Center
 Monday, March 5

Celtic Celebration
Peery's Egyptian Theater
 Saturday, March 17

Utah All-State High School
Art Show
Springville Museum
 Friday, March 23

Holi - Festival of Colors
Sri Sri Radha Temple
 Saturday, March 24

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shown towards them/us. People do not realize the sacrifices each of them/us make when we decide (or someone decides for us) to leave our countries.

My parents told me many things, but failed to tell me that leaving Jalostotitlán would shape my identity in ways that, up to this date, I am still trying to understand. They forgot to tell me that I would have an in-between identity. I like to think that my identity is the better part of two worlds, even though I will never fully belong to either world.

Claudia Snow

My mother had been promised an education for one of her children here in the United States from a family friend that we had met in Peru. So after my sister finished school, she got married and decided to stay in the states. My mother moved to Utah to help with her first child, and my other sister and brother also decided to make the move to Utah. So I found myself alone with my family 6000 miles away. Family is important to me, so I decided to make the move to be close to family once again. I arrived in Salt Lake City for the millennium speaking very little English and only knowing my family. There were some differences upon arriving to the United States that excited me and scared me.

One of the first was my traditional greeting. I never considered it unusual until I came here—in Peru, it is custom to give a kiss on the cheek when you meet someone. I remember the first time I tried to kiss an American on the

cheek. She kept moving away from me as I kept moving towards her. She reacted with discomfort and was shocked by my proximity to her face. I have to admit, I still enjoy this reaction when I greet both friends and strangers.

Oh how I loved the snow that falls here in Utah! So soft, quiet and clean, making the whole world so beautiful and so different. I love to watch it snow. Growing up on the equator, my only experience with snow was ice on high mountain peaks. It took time getting used to driving and living in the snow. Fortunately, after living here for a while I realized that I was not the only one having issues driving in the snow. Another thing that I really love are the freeways. They are great, straight and wide—nothing like the roads we have in Peru. They make getting from one place to another so easy, fast, and direct. But they, like the snow, took some time to get used to.

I don't ever feel that I completely fit into my new society here in America, but I was surprised when I traveled back to Peru and found out that I don't exactly fit there either. My friends giggled at my new Spanish accent. Ways that I used to do things in Peru are different then they do them in the USA. And now I could see how they were different and better then my old ways. I find myself with my feet in two different worlds, not really fitting into either completely, but being part of both at the same time. This gives me perspective that I would not have if I had stayed in Peru. I feel privileged that I can have so much in common with two very distinct cultures.

Living in two countries has



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3 march



student affairs
diversity council

On the third Wednesday of each month from 12:00-1:30, the SADC sponsors a seminar. Put us on the calendar.

Not Yet Post-Racial: A Continuing Conversation on the Significance of Race

Dr. Maria Ledesma
Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership & Policy
March 21
Union, Parlor A

Bullied

Jamie Nabozny
April 18
Saltair Room

Spirituality in the 21st Century

Jan Saeed, Westminster College
May 16
Union, Parlor A

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given me a perspective on diversity and race that I did not have when I was growing up in Peru. There I was part of the majority and issues of race and equality were not even an issue. However, when I came to the US and found myself part of a minority, I began to understand the

problems and privileges that exist in both societies. It has been a great learning and growing experience for me as a person and I have felt lucky to have made the journey. I feel so empowered by my diversity and seek to share this perspective with others and help them see the power that comes from diversity.

**Women's Week - Edie Kochenour Memorial Lecture
"Girls are Bad and Math and Science ... or Are They?"**

The 2012 Edie Kochenour Memorial Event will feature Dr. Janet Hyde, Professor of Psychology and Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Dr. Hyde will address the ways socialization of girls and young women can lead to a premature limiting of vocational and life choices.

Her studies have suggested that men and women are more psychologically alike than they are different. However, the belief that men and women differ significantly in cognitive ability, communication style and social traits continues. "Such beliefs cause harm in numerous realms, including women's opportunities in the workplace..." according to Hyde.

The lecture will take place in the auditorium in Orson Spencer Hall on Friday March 23 at from 12:00 noon to 1:15 pm. Networking and a light lunch will be available from 11:15 to 11:45 am in the Union Lounge (south end of the Union Building). Register online at: http://training.hr.utah.edu/registration.jsp?class_ids=277

student affairs diversity council

- Debra Daniels, Co-chair Women's Resource Center
- Kari Ellingson, Co-chair Student Affairs, Student Development
- Maria Baldwin Educational Opportunity Programs
- Kajsa Berlin-Kaufusi Office of International Education
- Michael Bard Registrar's Office
- Arlyn Bradshaw Dean of Students Office
- Holly M. Coleman Office of Student Recruitment
- Karen Cone-Uemura Counseling Center
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- Scott Jensen Housing & Residential Education
- Suzanne Jones Registrar's Office

- Justin Kyremes-Parks Orientation
- Carol MacNicholl Center for Disability Services
- Cathy Martinez LGBT Center
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- Claudia Snow Network Support
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